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SABALENKA STEALS SHOW ON SUPER SATURDAY

While Aryna Sabalenka defended her Australian Open title, Rohan Bopanna became the oldest man to win a Grand Slam. A look...

BOPANNA SHINES THROUGH

After securing the World No. 1 spot, Bopanna and Matthew Ebden beat Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori 7-6 (7/0), 7-5 in the final to win the title. Bopanna's previous GS win was at the 2017 French Open in mixed doubles | **P13**

1ST SINCE AZARENKA TO DEFEND AO TITLE
Sabalenka blew China's Zheng Qinwen (6-3, 6-2) off court to successfully defend her title — the first woman to do so in more than a decade.
SABALENKA

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Nitish may quit today, stake claim to head the new govt with the BJP, take oath

I.N.D.I.A fractured in Bihar, stabilises in Uttar Pradesh

RAMASHANKAR @Patna

EIGHT-TIME Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar is expected to tender his resignation as the head of the Grand Alliance government by Sunday morning and become a nine-time CM later in the day, a source close to him said on Saturday.

Before putting in his papers, he will hold a formal legislature party meeting of the JD(U) and then stake his claim to form the new government with the BJP and its allies. The swearing-in ceremony will be held around 4 pm on Sunday, the source said.

Initially Nitish along with a few leaders of the BJP will take the oath of office. Union home minister Amit Shah and BJP president J P Nadda will be among the prominent BJP leaders participating in the swearing-in ceremony of the new NDA government.

On Saturday, the BJP held a meeting of its core committee in the presence of its Bihar in-charge Vinod Tawde. Sources said the BJP will collect consent letters from its all 78 MLAs and hand them over to Nitish before staking his claim to form the NDA government.

Amid the drama, Nitish invited all JD(U) MLAs to his official residence in the evening and shared with them the realignment plan. He was busy with his official programmes earlier in the day.

Sources said Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) chief Chirag Paswan will also be present at the swearing-in. Chirag was initially hesitant but consented after meeting Shah in New Delhi. Both Nadda and Chirag will arrive in Patna from New Delhi on a chartered flight on Sunday.

Despite power slipping away, RJD leader and Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Prasad Yadav put up a brave face, saying '*Khel baki hain*' (game is still open). The party authorised his dad Lalu Yadav to take the final call on the full-blown crisis.

Another indication of the Grand Alliance falling apart came for JD(U) spokesperson Neeraj Kumar's blistering attack on Lalu over the railway jobs-for-land scam he and his family are involved in.

Akhilesh claims Cong deal on 11 seats; final call not yet, says GOP

NAMITA BAJPAI @Lucknow

THE Congress finally got some positive news on seat sharing for the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections after bickering with the Trinamool Congress and the AAP. Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Saturday claimed the Congress had settled for 11 Lok Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh as part of its alliance.

"Our cordial alliance with the Congress is off to a good start with 11 strong seats. This trend will move forward with the winning equation," Yadav said on social media platform X. Last week, the SP did a seven-seat deal with the Jayant Chaudhury-led Rashtriya Lok Dal.

The grand old party (GOP), however, was circumspect.

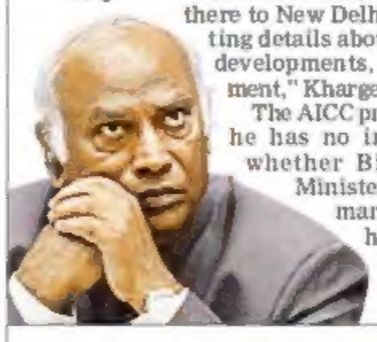
"Regarding Akhilesh ji's X post, let me make it clear that any decision on seat sharing will be taken by our central election committee headed by Mukul Wasnik, " said UP Congress Committee chief Ajai Rai.

At present, the Congress has only one MP from Uttar Pradesh. If it accepts the deal, the SP will be left with 62 of the total 80 Lok Sabha seats in UP. Sources said during the initial rounds of talks, the Congress had demanded 25 seats, or at least 21 seats it had won in 2009.

Kharge: Will strive to keep I.N.D.I.A intact

RAMAKRISHNA BADSESHI @Kalaburagi

Political parties or their leaders, who believe in democracy, should remain in I.N.D.I.A . I will continue my efforts to prevail upon the leaders of I.N.D.I.A to fight against communal forces
Mallikarjun Kharge



AMID rumours of a split in I.N.D.I.A, AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge said on Saturday that he will continue his efforts to keep the alliance intact.

Addressing reporters at the airport here, Kharge said he is not aware of the latest political developments in Bihar.

"If I comment without having any details of the developments there, it will give scope for confusion. I will go to Dehradun on Sunday and from there to New Delhi. After getting details about the latest developments, I will comment," Kharge said.

The AICC president said he has no information whether Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar had met or he is going to meet the governor.

"How can I comment when I have no information on the latest developments in Bihar?" he said.

"Political parties or their leaders, who believe in democracy, should remain in I.N.D.I.A . I have written to Nitish Kumar, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and CPI(M) secretary-general Sitaram Yechury advocating the need for strengthening I.N.D.I.A to save democracy. I tried to contact Nitish Kumar, but could not. I will continue my efforts to prevail upon the leaders of the constituents of I.N.D.I.A to be united and fight against the communal forces," Kharge said.

Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee working president and Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre, Medical Education Minister Sharanprakash Patil, KKRDB president Ajay Singh and district Congress committee president Jagadev Guttedar were present.

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GOVERNOR'S PROTEST

Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan on Saturday stages a sit-in protest in Kollam district against the police's failure to prevent protests by SFI students | **P5** | **DN**

HC judges give clashing orders, apex court steps in

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @New Delhi

IN a special sitting on a Saturday, a five-judge bench of the Supreme Court headed by the Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud stayed all proceedings of the Calcutta High Court related to a case on caste certificate scam in MBBS admission after two benches of the high court issued conflicting orders.

The bizarre chain of events began after a single bench of Justice Gangopadhyay handed over the probe in the case to the CBI on Wednesday. A division bench of Justices Soumen Sen and Uday Kumar Ganguly then stayed that order on the same day. Later, on the following day, Justice Gangopadhyay overruled the stay order of the division bench and directed the central agency to go ahead with the investigation. Justice Gandopadhyay accused Justice Soumen Sen of the division bench of acting in the interest of the West Bengal government. Staying further proceedings, the SC posted the matter for Monday.

EXPRESS READ

148.17-km Suburban Rail Project to be extended by 5.5 km

Bengaluru: The Bengaluru Suburban Rail Project (BSRP), which was planned for 148.17 km, is all set to be extended by 5.5 km. Sources said the state government has already given its consent and now, the Centre's approval is being sought | **P2**

Major accreditation reforms in higher edu institutes in offing

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

THE National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) on Saturday decided to bring in major reforms in its accreditation to higher educational institutions (HEIs) like colleges, universities and recognised academic institutions.

The council has decided to give 'binary accreditation' to institutions, which means they will either be accredited or not accredited; and those accredited, will be given levels from 1 to 5 for excellence in research and education.

The binary accreditation will replace the process of giving grades to encourage all the institutions to get on board in the accreditation process. **P5**

With 1,106 colleges, B'luru ranks 1st in India

PURAN CHOUDHARY @Bengaluru

BENGALURU Urban district has the highest density of colleges in the country, according to All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE).

The city, which is known for its startup culture and multinational technology parks, has 1,106 colleges. Jaipur has 703 colleges, Hyderabad 491, Pune 475 and Prayagraj 398, AISHE stated in its recently released report for 2021-22.

Karnataka tops the list of colleges in per lakh eligible population in the age group of 18-23, called college density. "Karnataka (66), Telangana (52), Andhra Pradesh (49), Himachal Pradesh (47), Puducherry (53) and Kerala (46) are the states/UTs which have a high number of colleges per lakh population," the report stated.

In all, Karnataka has 4,430 colleges, securing the third position after Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. Yet, Karnataka has only 704 government colleges.

Interestingly, the state's record is impressive as regards the number of teachers from the OBC category, securing second position with 56,472 individuals. Tamil Nadu has 1,47,003 teachers from that category.

Despite having a high college density, the male-female student enrollment ratio in Karnataka is low.

CONTINUED ON: P5

Survey highlights

- Kamataka and TN have the best Pupil-Teacher Ratio
- Kamataka ranks 2nd in OBC teachers (56,472)
- Gross enrollment rises from 23.4% to 25.8%